

Maj. Powell

*With the respects of
B. Sunderland.*

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1885

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Our Republic in the Family of Nations:"

A SERMON

DELIVERED AT

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

WASHINGTON, D. C.,

BY THE PASTOR,

Rev. BYRON SUNDERLAND, D. D.,

SABBATH, JULY 5TH, 1885.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:

R. O. POLKINHORN & SON, PRINTERS.

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WASHINGTON, D. C., *July 9, 1885.*

Rev. BYRON SUNDERLAND, D. D.:

DEAR SIR: Your sermon of last Sabbath, appropriate to the anniversary of American independence, has been an especial subject of gratified comment among those who were so fortunate as to hear it. Believing that its impressive and eloquent exhibit of the lessons of our country's history should be in a form for preservation and general circulation, we earnestly request that you furnish the manuscript of the discourse for publication.

We are, with great respect,

yours truly,

CHARLES L. DU BOIS.	EDW. D. TRACY.	DAVID WOLFE BROWN.
THEO. F. SARGENT.	JOHN E. CARPENTER.	WM. B. BRYAN.
JOHN B. WIGHT.	DR. G. F. JOHNSTON.	A. W. PENTLAND.
Rev. JOHN MACLEAN.	M. WYLIE.	A. B. WEBB.
JOHN U. O'MEARA.	D. E. CAHILL.	WM. C. O'MEARA.
ASA WHITEHEAD.	D. D. SMITH.	

WASHINGTON, D. C., *July 9, 1885.*

TO CHARLES L. DU BOIS, EDW. D. TRACY,

DAVID WOLFE BROWN AND OTHERS:

GENTLEMEN: Your very flattering request of this date is before me. The discourse was prepared in the ordinary round of Pastoral duty, and with no thought whatever of publication. But I yield to your judgment, and place the manuscript at your disposal.

With affectionate regard,

B. SUNDERLAND.

SERMON.

Ps. cxlvii. 20. "He hath not dealt so with any nation."

The patriot Psalmist celebrates God's dealing with his people. Divine care of the nations is a sublime study. If, in some respects, the Hebrew story is unparalleled, yet the rise of this Republic is one of the greatest marvels.

It took four hundred years to collect the elements of the nation which Moses led through the wilderness, and which Joshua planted in Canaan. It took five hundred years more of the theocracy to consolidate the tribes into a formal national unity. The monarchy lasted a thousand years, but it was not a happy family. At the close of the third reign the tribes were sundered. Two kingdoms arose in the place of one. Ten tribes made Samaria their capital, two only adhered to the City of David.

Seven hundred years B. C. Samaria was blotted from the map of nations. Two hundred years later the Jews were carried to Babylon. Five hundred years later still Judea became a Roman province and every vestige of Jewish nationality was swept away.

At no time was the territory of the Hebrew monarchy larger than the State of Vermont. The life of the humbler classes was pastoral and agricultural. The arts were few and primitive. Religion was the engrossment and war the trade of men—yet the nation shone in oriental splendor—in gold and jewels and wealth of gorgeous apparel. The vast foundations of law and order and human civilization were laid. Prophets became the teachers of mankind, and the door was opened to still grander changes and possibilities of the future.

When America was discovered, the family of nations had been re-cast. Africa had sunken in unknown darkness. Asia, the scene of the Dispersion and of the first Empires was drowsy in the sleep of ages. Europe alone gave signs of life, while yet a mighty incubus sat upon her breast. The Fourth Empire had gone in pieces. The Ten Kingdoms were instinct with forces ready to awake at the trumpet call of the Reformation. But Italy was still the proud seat of the Papal Church—Germany lay panting and dreaming at her feet. Austria and Spain, France and England were her favored daughters. The latter three contended for the leadership of the world. Russia, dark and gruesome, was rising in the North. The foot of the Turk was on the neck of Greece.

The new found continent became the quest of imperial ambition. Exploration followed. Colonies were planted. The standards of Europe floated wherever the royal Powers could obtain a foot-hold. Finns, Swedes, Dutch, Germans, French, Spaniards, Irish, Scotch and English sought the Hesperian shores. Papists, Puritans, Quakers, Huguenots, Episcopalians, Presbyterians came hither during that colonial period of almost three hundred years. The jealousies and wars of the Kingdoms for the possession of this country ended with the peace of Paris, 1763. The thirteen colonies became dependencies of the British crown. The Protestant religion was thus rooted in this soil.

To a few years' oppression by King and Parliament we can trace the rejoicing of yesterday. Taxation without representation was the *initial* of the contest. Acts of coercion and injustice precipitated the Declaration. The die was cast. Never was any nation so planted in prayers and tears; never was God's hand more marked in the affairs of any people since the world began.

It has been the fashion with sceptics of the present century to ascribe to Thomas Paine, who afterwards declared him-

self a deist and impugned the bible, a reward of merit in the war of the Revolution, to which he is not justly entitled, and which will be lessened rather than increased in the judgment of posterity. He was once a Quaker preacher of Thetford. But having had a checkered career, and finally spoiled his prospects at home, he came to the colonies as an adventurer, having obtained from Benjamin Franklin, then in London, a note of introduction to his son-in-law Richard Bache, of Philadelphia—at which city he arrived in December, 1774. His pamphlet entitled “Common Sense” was published January 10th, 1776, about thirteen months after his arrival. In this pamphlet he testifies that he has never met a man, either in England or America, who believed that separation from the mother country would not come sooner or later.

Abigail Adams, the first lady who occupied the White House, from the little farm at the foot of Penn Hill, wrote her husband at Philadelphia, in November, 1775, these words :

“I could not join to-day in the petitions of our worthy pastor for reconciliation. Let us separate; they are no longer worthy to be our brethren. Let us renounce them, and instead of supplications, as formerly, for their prosperity and happiness, let us beseech the Almighty to blast their counsels and bring to naught all their devices.”

This noble woman, two months before “Common Sense” appeared, had voiced the sentiment which was quickening in the hearts of the colonists. Paine was sharp to see the drift of public opinion. He seized the opportunity to appeal to the religious faith of the harassed people. He drew an argument from the Old Testament against monarchical government. This was the chief emphasis of his pamphlet: It proved to be a spark to fire the train already laid. I have no wish unjustly to detract from the

merit of any actor in that day of Revolution, but had he then insulted the colonies with a book, which he called the "Age of Reason"—finished among the scenes of "The French Reign of Terror"—and published seventeen years after the pamphlet "Common Sense," he would have been hissed into obscurity, by a people too thoroughly religious and too grandly in earnest to be trifled with or deceived by the flippant sophistry of Unbelief.

The story of that great time will descend to the latest generations. The subjects of complaint were far different from those of the Egyptian bondage, and in the comparison not wholly intolerable. But it only goes to show the progress of the sentiment of human freedom, fraternity, and equality, under the light of a restored Christianity, and that the eighteenth century of the Gospel of Jesus found men ready to resist oppression which, in the age of Moses, would have been deemed a fantasy.

Our fathers and mothers were the children of men who fought that mighty battle—and of the women on whose hearts the soldiers of Independence leaned for sympathy and courage.

When the war was over and the Constitution adopted, the infant Republic stood upon this narrow strip of Atlantic sea coast from Maine to the Carolinas—three millions of people, in debt, battered, impoverished, exhausted by the long desolation—but filled with the hopes of a splendid future, and ready for the last and greatest experiment of self-government. Was there ever anything like it on the face of the earth? Has God ever dealt so with any nation?

We have heard of many forms of government, but was there ever any human government that has prospered in a single century as this has? This Republic is purely Democratic. The Greek and Roman Republics were aristocratic, giving rise to innumerable conflicts between patrician and plebeian, succeeded always by the sceptre and the crown. But here

we have no hereditary titles; no law of primogeniture; no privileged nobility; no feudal system; no union of Church and State. All men are free and equal before the law. All the great offices are elective, to which citizens home-born may all aspire. The legalized forms of slavery have ceased forever. There remains but one relic of barbarism, foisted on the nation by a mockery of religion, and destined to perish with the delusion which gave it birth. In this country people of every language, race, religion or no religion, find a home;—unless it be a Chinese influx, like a stone in the stomach, that cannot assimilate. Our public domain is far larger than the Roman Empire in its palmy days. Our system of jurisprudence is a vast improvement on the legal customs of other times and of other lands.

The schools of the Republic are one of its grandest features. Education is bound to be universal. The land already shines with the white light of intelligence diffused in every part. Illiteracy here is a doomed thing. The Press has a freedom of scope which it enjoys in no other land on the face of the globe—and though it is often prostituted to the vilest purposes—though it reeks with falsehood till society finds vent in the amazement of Falstaff himself when he, not the most truthful of men, cries out, “How this world is given to lying!” Nevertheless it has a marvellous mission and is everywhere instinct with the spirit of information, and a vast educational power. Our resources are immense. The cities and towns, the great thoroughfares and water courses, the countless industries, the arts, the inventions, the mastery of the elements, the power of travel, of transportation, and of inter-communication, the flashing of intelligence, the literature, the science, the philosophy, and above all the religious spirit of our times—are the wonders of a civilization that seems only yet to be upon the threshold of its course.

Our hundred years of national life is simply monu-

mental. Almost the latest-born in the family of nations, our history has been a surprise to other people and to ourselves, at every step of our advancement. For many years the monarchists of Europe looked upon our Government as only a wild experiment that must end in failure. To all these animadversions the logic of events responds. In all our wars peace has come only to enrich us with new spoils. Would to God the soul of the nation were not stained with so many wrongs done to the Red man, who, in his turn has wreaked vindictive vengeance. Will a day of reckoning ever come!

In the last and greatest war, the world looked on in terror—some fearing and some gloating over the anticipated catastrophe. The Republic, they said, had gone to pieces in the red sea of civil strife. What should we do with human bondage? What with the national debt? What with two millions of fighting men suddenly released from the bloody trade of war? What with the negro race? What with the fragments of shattered States? Time has already made reply. We are a single people—"Union and liberty now and forever, one and inseparable!" All men are free. The race question is settling itself. The franchise will be maintained. The debt is being paid. The national credit never stood so high as at this moment. Our currency is the finest in the world. The States have been restored,—not a star blotted out, not a stripe effaced. Our armies have melted away into the arts of peace—belted and spurred while the conflict raged, but when it was over, home-sick for the old faces and old places where they sported in childhood, and where they missed so many they would meet here no more.

Our Government has been shocked and tested in other ways. Four Presidents have died in office, two by the invisible hand of disease, two by assassination. They were fearful strokes, and smote home to the nation's heart. But the patience and the sympathy of the people have simply

been sublime. In an elective government there will always be sectional interests and political parties, and with a people as mercurial and yet as wise as our own, it is one of the noblest characteristics that when the national suffrage has rendered its decree, all law abiding people immediately submit as to the supreme fiat of the land—for we must never forget that we may be of this section or of that, of this party or of that, but we are all Americans with a common pride in our institutions, and a common interest in their purity and prosperity. The silent transition of such vast power from living hand to living hand—not as in monarchies from the dead to the living—is it not wonderful?

So the Providence of God has led us on; and what is it now that calls forth this amazing popular energy? The problems of society are not all resolved. Individual hardship and perhaps class hardship there must be. No great policy is perfect yet. There are many questions that are taxing the highest genius of the nation. But the whole tendency of our national life is to grapple with the great existing evils, to look them squarely in the face, and make the charity and philanthropy of Christ effectual in suppressing ignorance and crime, idleness and vice, selfishness and poverty and misery of every form. This is the practical aim of Christianity. This is the end of that religion which more than any other influence has made us what we are, and which the Divine Founder designed should be the chief blessing to men, women and children in all our generations!

Yes, it is now more than ever the land of the bible and the sanctuary—I wish I might add of the quiet sabbath—the day of rest—the one great landmark of the beneficence of the Almighty to His human creatures. We need this pause in the fever and tumult of our times. We need it for the repose of body and soul. We need it for a people whose life is so intense, so exacting, so consuming.

And this is the theatre that God has given us—a land where human nature is under a mighty pressure—and all there is of it is turned inside out. There is no more any privacy in human conduct. It is the day of judgment for every human being. We know the worst and the best of human society. We know its defects and its excellencies, and there is a grand process of development going on to establish mankind more firmly in material comfort, morality and a spiritual religion.

Here is our country planted in the breast of the oceans, cut off from “entangling alliances,” isolated, independent, magnificent, sublime. We believe it is the point of support—the fulcrum of God’s lever to lift up the world. In the family of nations the Republic stands unique and unparalleled—a marvellous creation, an agent of immense force through the prodigious influence of its silent example.

A hundred years ago the eastern half of Asia was shut away from the occidental world—buried amid ancient customs which had nothing in common with the advancement of modern civilization. India was already in the grasp of British power. The Persians and their mountain neighbors were hedged about with giant forests and desert solitudes. Over the western half of the continent the Crescent was already paling. The wars with Russia in the north and France and England in the south, were wasting the Moslem strength and preparing “the sick man” for his last transition. In Europe Imperialism and the Hierarchy had reached their culmination. The Reformation had cloven in twain the Papal kingdoms. Spain had lost her prestige. Russia was looming into gigantic proportions round the entire Arctic circle. The Low countries were the home of the Dutch Republic—and the British Empire had become Protestant under a constitutional monarchy. The German Principalities were seething with intestine commotions. Austria adhered with a fatal devotion to the Papal cause.

Poland was dismembered; Prussia emasculated; France, on the eve of an explosion; and the lesser countries, trembling with convulsions which shook the continent from center to circumference. In little Switzerland—that eagle's nest—the egg of Republican liberty was laid. Calvin was the champion of doctrines which bore their fruit in the colonial Congress. Lonely, benighted, down-trodden Africa sent forth a loud and bitter cry, when all around her coast the slave ships hovered to take their cargoes of quivering human flesh.

South America and Mexico were dominated by the western nations of Europe. Louisiana belonged to France, Canada to England, Alaska to Russia. The islands were shrouded in obscurity. Australia had just received the first English colony at New South Wales. This was the map of the nations a century ago when the old bell at Philadelphia tolled out the Declaration on the ears of a people driven to these western wilds by the storms of religious persecution, and bent now on independence and freedom to worship God!

And what have we seen in this family of nations since then? Thomas Paine, while a member of the French Assembly predicted that Europe would be Republican in seven years. Twenty years later Napoleon said that in half a century Europe would be either all Cossack or all Republican. Neither of these men were accurate as to the time, but certainly the secret forces of humanity in one form or other are waking up and preparing the way for a new order of things. Immense changes have already transpired. At the bottom of these changes lies the foundation truth of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. We are finding out that the world has been governed too much—that the masses have been trampled down by the few—that true nobility is not by titled descent—that prince and peasant, white men, yellow men, red men, and black men were made of one blood in all the earth—and that distinctions

of rank ought to spring from merit rather than from birth—that intellect is better than brawn and wisdom than coffers of gold; that the mastery of mind over matter excels the mastery of matter over mind; that the arts of peace are far grander than the arts of war; that political economy is not simply the excise, revenue, customs, tariffs, taxes and the expenses and disbursements of a government resting upon the pillars of physical power, but a science of industry, frugality, morality and intelligence; that the protection and happiness of society means that the strong shall help the weak, that human misfortune shall create houses of refuge and fields of labor, and that the miseries of men shall awaken the sacred charities of humanity.

Going along with these things are equal laws, liberal legislation, pure administration, incorruptible courts, personal freedom, a fair chance in the race of life, social order, with all the grand and generous hopes, the noble aspirations and thrilling possibilities which give to men and women the sacred motives of activity in every great department of human enterprise.

Prejudice and prescription have amazing tenacity. Reform of old abuses and deeply rooted errors evermore marches slowly, but thanks be to God, will surely arrive at last. We have discovered this prime fact in human history, that whenever any great step is about to be taken in human progress, God has his man ready, and there at his post we find him! What have we seen in Europe during this hundred years?—the two Napoleon empires, the revolutions of '48; the cessation of Russian serfdom; Italy unified; the Papacy bereft of temporal power; Germany in the ascendant; France attempting republican government—England shaken with home pains and colonial convulsions, putting forth immense power in many directions—forcing opium on China, blowing Sepoys from the cannon's mouth, grasping territory in every quarter of the globe, adding India to the

empire, making reluctant concessions of free-trade and suffrage, while Ireland like a burning fever is raging at her heart. No country has been so powerfully affected by this, our silent American example, as that Mother land from which the colonies were separated a century ago. In this example the liberal party now dominant in the British islands has found its chief support and keenest inspiration. The monarchy is but a name. The government of England is already an aristocratic Republic. It will become more and more a democratic government. The nations cannot behold the example of this American Union without being transformed into the same image. That fearful, desperate, diabolical protest against absolute despotism, which men call Nihilism, is but an insane cry of the oppressed for the liberty conferred in this Republic. Human souls, mad with the wrongs and outrages of ages, forgetting God and inspired of Satan, seek clandestine vengeance on the power that holds them down. Alas, they have never studied the religious fervor and sublime trust in God in which our Republic was born.

But not alone in Europe is our example teaching the nations. Like the Queen of Sheba seeking to know the glory of Solomon—kings and emperors from distant regions—ambassadors from the oldest governments existing upon earth, have come in person among us to study our institutions, and bear away into remote countries, the light of our intelligence and the life of our pursuits. Already the moral sun of liberty, which broke upon the world in the Hall of Independence, has begun to rise over the night of oriental peoples. During this time we have planted a Republic on the western coast of Africa, and established a marine police to prevent the recurrence of the infamous slave trade. But above all and beyond all our Republic has done for the amelioration of the world, are the American Christian Missions now planted in every quarter of the globe, and breathing forth

on the tribes, long perishing in darkness, the life-giving spirit of that Almighty Being who inspired our Revolution and gave us this mighty christianized civil State—the standing miracle of the nations.

Sometimes, when I think of it all, a vision rises before me, something like what I imagine was the vision of a prophet in the ancient time.

I see a form, bloody and pale at first, ascending on the face of the earth. There is carnage at its appearance. I hear the shoutings of captains and the thunder of battle, and where the death storm falls and the iron hail, I hear the moans of the dying; the faces grow white and the grave gathers over them. At length I see unnumbered mounds and the dark cypress waving above them. Then I see a procession of mourners—the widows and fair brides of the dead erape-clad—bewailing the slaughter, and millions of tears watering the flowers they have planted in the places of sepulture. But they are proud in their desolation for their heroes have died bravely. Then far away the dun clouds of war are wafted sullenly, and the hoarse raven dips his beak no more in the blood of the slain. Whereat I see the form first rising, as it were, of a woman full of charms—rising upward still more beautiful and majestic—and there is a garment of light about her, and she has a golden girdle as of a constitution, and her feet are sandaled with declarations, and a wreath of laws is on her brow, and a mighty sword is in her uplifted hands, and scales as it had been of justice. And power is given to her and great attraction. New motions of life begin to stir among the human masses, for a divine prowess seems flowing down upon them from her presence. And stars become the symbols of her dominion to prophesy of the future, as the stripes are of her struggles telling of the sorrows of the past. And the people hail her as they would a great deliverance; and mighty plaudits and greetings of fervent joy ascend to heaven.

Then I saw the genius of that form beating as the life blood beats in the heart of a giant when a large work is to be done; and I saw how all the older forms of government paled before this fair daughter of the nations; how ancient laws and constitutions bowed their reverend heads, and all the fame of antiquity did obeisance. The sons of science, the sages and ministers of learning, and all the men of might, were filled with admiration. And still that form rose higher with herculean strength, and brighter with the beams of angelic hope, and geography had to be re-written to correct her boundaries, and political arithmetic and economy had to change their data to give a wider scope to her problem of human destiny. Oppression trembled before her, and the infernal arts of conquest and subversion were paralyzed beneath her glance—and there away in the van of universal liberty and light, law and religion, strode the form of the Powerful—a Titan strength pulsing in her breast—the smile of the Almighty impressed upon her brow. The children gleesome saluted her with morning benisons, and the old men left her their benediction when they died. And as that form fairer and mightier rose upon my gaze, I wept and clapped my hands for joy, for I discerned in its greatness the spirit of my country! Amen.





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